

Nomination for Members of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation

October 4, 1994

The President today announced his intention to appoint the final eight members to the President's Committee on Mental Retardation. The appointees are Gisselle Acevedo Franco, Tom Smith, Robert Dinerstein, Cathy Ficker Terrill, Deborah Spitalnik, Lorenzo Aguilar-Melancon, Ruth Luckasson, and Virginia Williams.

"We have now assembled a strong and dynamic group of advocates, self advocates, family members and professionals who share our common vision of moving from exclusion to inclusion, from dependence to independence, from paternalism to empowerment," the President said. "I look forward to the leadership that these dedicated appointees will provide to the committee."

NOTE: Biographies of the nominees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks at a State Dinner for President Nelson Mandela

October 4, 1994

President Mandela, members of the South African delegation, distinguished guests, my fellow Americans. Mr. President, the American people welcome you to the White House on this, the occasion of your first state visit to the United States. You've been an inspiration to the American people. You have been a genuine inspiration to the American people and to freedom-loving people around the world, people who still marvel at the price you paid for your conviction, a conviction that our country embraces but still struggles to live up to: the conviction that all men and women are created equal and, therefore, ought to have a chance to live up to the fullest of their God-given potential and to have an equal say in the affairs of their land.

Your captivity symbolized the larger captivity of your nation, shackled to the chains of prejudice, bigotry, and hatred. And your release also freed your nation and all its people to reach their full potential, a quest too long and so cruelly denied.

But your story, thankfully, for all South Africans and for the rest of us as well, does not end with your freedom; it continues into what you have sought to do with your freedom. Because you've found within you the strength to reconcile, to unite, to make whole a country too long divided, you are giving real life to the magnificent words that begin the Freedom Charter you helped to draft nearly 40 years ago: "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white."

Now, instead of focusing on the past 342 years, when South Africa did not belong to all who lived in it, you are building a future of trust and tolerance. White South Africans might have fled in fear of retribution, but instead, they have had the courage to stay and to join you in building a new future for all the people of your land. I would say to a world too often torn apart by racial and ethnic and religious strife: Watch South Africa as it comes together, and follow South Africa's example.

As an American, and as a child of the southern part of our country who grew up in a segregated environment and saw firsthand its horror and its debasement of all of us who lived in it, I must add that, as you well know, Mr. President, your presence here has special significance for Americans. We have been especially drawn to the problems and the promise of South Africa. We have struggled, and continue to struggle, with our own racial challenges. So we rejoice, especially, in what you have accomplished, and we hold it out. And as we hold it out as an example to others, so we also hold it out as an example to ourselves.

Mr. President, I know how proud you are to have your daughter, Zinzi, with you on this trip, and I am proud to have her as my dinner partner tonight. I know that during your years in captivity you were a prodigious letter writer and your daughter was one of your favorite correspondents, not least because of her own writing talent.

In one letter, written from your cell at Robben Island Prison, you counseled her as follows: "While you have every reason to be angry with the fates for the setbacks you may have suffered from time to time, you must vow to turn those misfortunes into victory. There are few misfortunes in this world you

cannot turn into personal triumph if you have the iron will and the necessary skill.”

President Mandela, you have shown us the iron will and the necessary skill. And I might add, you have done it with genuine compassion for others. We are honored by your presence here. We are honored by the promise that your leadership offers your country. We are committed to your success and proud of the partnership we have already established.

And so I ask all my fellow Americans to raise their glasses to you and to all those who have led South Africa into the bright light of freedom.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Congressional Black Caucus Luncheon for President Mandela

October 5, 1994

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Mr. President, Members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the White House. Welcome to this occasion marking what Martin Luther King once called “a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.”

Most of you in this room, through your prayers and your actions, helped to keep freedom’s flame lit during the dark night of apartheid in South Africa. Now here we are: South Africa is free; Nelson Mandela is President. Some dreams really do come true.

We are also here because of our own ongoing struggle against racism and intolerance and division. Over the years South Africans and Americans have shared ideas and drawn strength from one another. The NAACP was founded just a few months before the African National Congress, and close bonds were forged between two of the greatest leaders our two countries have produced, Nobel Prize winners Albert Luthuli and Dr. King.

Over the years Americans raised a powerful, unified voice for justice and change in South Africa that would not go unheard. A diverse coalition spread the word: churches, universities, human rights organizations; ulti-

mately, banks, businesses, cities, and State governments. The tools they wielded, cultural and economic sanctions, divestment, international isolation, ultimately helped to force the apartheid regime to end more than four decades of repression.

At the center of this movement stood the Congressional Black Caucus. The caucus helped to raise the consciousness of all Americans to the terrible injustice of apartheid, and it consistently acted upon a deep-rooted commitment to South Africa’s freedom. Representative Ron Dellums introduced the first antiapartheid legislation in 1972, the year the CBC was founded. It took 14 more years, the unbending will of the CBC, and ultimately the willingness of Congress to override a veto. But you persevered, you prevailed. And today we can say, South Africa’s triumph is your triumph, too. And we thank you.

Now that freedom and democracy have won, they must be nurtured. And that is the ultimate purpose of President Mandela’s visit to us in the United States. Working with Congress and the private sector, our administration is helping to promote trade with and investment in South Africa, not only for the good of South Africans but in our own interests as well. The private sector, which made its weight felt in the fight against apartheid, must now lead the effort to build a prosperous South Africa. This is not, I say again, about charity. It’s about opportunity, opportunity for South Africans, opportunity for Americans.

We must also help South Africa to create jobs, housing, and schools; to improve health care; to fight illiteracy and poverty. These are challenges with which the new South Africa must contend, now and vigorously. And rising to meet them, South Africa will become a model for all of Africa.

Let me add that our concern must not end with South Africa. For all its problems, Africa is a continent of tremendous promise and progress. I reject the “Afro pessimism,” as it’s been called, that is often expressed around this city. That’s why we’ll provide some \$3 billion to Africa this year, directly and through international organizations, for economic assistance and humanitarian relief; why we’ve had the first-ever conference on